Dear Sol, 1/21/91

I suppose you remember Leo Hurwitz from the time he spent at our Senate committee if not for other reasons. On the chance the Times obit did not get you attention, he is the short one from today's Wash. Post.

On reading of Paul Strand's recent death I remembered Leo but I did not then remember his name. My recollection may be wrong but it is that he then was Paul's assistant or associate in what I think was titled "Frontier Films." I remember both as nice guys. I know they did something based on or including our committee's work but can't remember what it was. Do you? Or did they start and lacked the money to complete it?

I have a vague recollection of visiting Paul or both them I was in New York in that period.

We had a Margaret Lawson on the committee staff. Was she the Peggy Lawson Leo married?

Each time I read the obit of one of the fine people we knew in those days the obits report what the papers did not report when they were blacklisted, that they were exceptionally talented people who also had social consciousness and reflected it in their work. As we look back on those dark days does it not become apparent that the blacklisting was largely over their social beliefs and their expressions of it that the reactionaries of that day could not tolerate? And does it not also call to mind how much the country lost from the backward-looking political hacks who to a large degree denied them the expression of what they would have produced?

"Native Land" was a magnificent movies. And all the remarkable talented men listed were blacklisted.

Blitzstein, if you were not aware, was killed in Haiti or some place near it. As I remember, you were fond of some of his music.

With nostalgia,

Harold

LEO HURWITZ
Documentary Maker

Leo Hurwitz, 81, an award-winning documentary filmmaker who was blacklisted in the 1950s, died of cancer Jan. 18 at his home in Manhattan.

His films included the 1942 "Native Land," co-directed by Paul Strand, narrated by Paul Robeson and scored by Marc Blitzstein, and "Dialogue With a Woman Departed," a tribute to his late wife and colleague, Peggy Lawson, which won an International Film Critics Prize in 1981.

While blacklisted for his leftist views in the 1950s and 1960s, Mr. Hurwitz continued to work as an independent filmmaker, and without credit co-produced, directed and segments for the CBS-TV "Omnibus" series. In the mid-1960s, he and six other directors sued the Directors Guild of America, in a case that resulted in a U.S. Supreme Court decision forcing the guild to remove a loyalty oath from its membership application.